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BioScience Cluster Grows Dramatically

Connecticut's BioScience Cluster continues to mature, expand and strengthen Connecticut's economy, despite the recent national economic downturn.

Connecticut-based BioScience research and development (R&D) investment in 2001 totaled \$3.6 billion—an 18 percent increase over 2000. Since 1995, the cluster's total R&D investments have increased 139 percent. The biotechnology sector led the way, with a 437 percent increase in R&D investments since 1995. Connecticut-based pharmaceutical companies now account for more than 12 percent of all R&D dollars spent by the nation's pharmaceutical companies.

The state's BioScience companies created 500 new jobs in 2001, increasing total cluster employment 3 percent, to nearly 16,500 people. Analysis shows that, directly and indirectly, Connecticut's BioScience Cluster ultimately affects nearly 52,000 jobs in the

state. The average R&D salary for BioScience employees held steady at approximately \$63,000.

Despite a difficult financial environment nationally, Connecticut biotechnology firms raised nearly \$557 million in private and public capital last year.

The BioScience Cluster was the first to formally organize under Connecticut's Industry Cluster Initiative. It encompasses pharmaceutical companies, biotechnology firms and university research operations, and its members include organizations in a wide variety of science- and health-related fields. CURE is the cluster's organizational center.

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Twenty-two Inner-City Students Shine in NFTE CT Business Plan Competition

They're skilled in identifying emerging market demands and developing new products. They're experts at calculating capital requirements, development costs and return on investment. They're polished presenters who can get an audience excited about their business goals.

CEOs of Fortune 500 businesses? Maybe someday. But, right now, they're inner-city high school students participating in the Youth BizPlan Competition sponsored by NFTE CT—a program that's a critical component of Connecticut's Inner City Business Strategy Initiative.

Based on the successful program developed by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship and designed especially for use in inner-city high schools, NFTE CT seeks to motivate and educate students through a curriculum based on developing entrepreneurial skills.

Many inner-city youths, born into poverty and having few role models, have low expectations and scarce hopes for their own future. NFTE helps them understand that the power to shape their future is in their hands, and that, through learning, hard work and the imaginative use of skills, they really can achieve their dreams.

Over the course of the program, each student develops a business plan for his or her own small company. They compete in each classroom, then students with the best plans go on to the statewide competition, where they make formal PowerPoint presentations to a panel of judges composed of leaders in business, government and education.

Twenty-two NFTE CT students came to the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury on March 27 for the final phase of the competition.

Accomplished, confident and well-spoken, each student greeted the judges, presented his or her plan and took questions. The businesses ranged from Jamaican meat patties sold before school to special clips to keep trousers from dragging to bon voyage baskets for students going off to college. And each presentation was as professional as any to be seen at prestigious venture fairs.

In the end, eight students won cash prizes for their outstanding plans, and others received \$100 prizes for their achievement in getting to the statewide competition.

This year's winners were:

Rasha Ayoub, Westhill High School, Stamford – First place, \$1,000
The Halal Meat and Middle Eastern Cuisine Store

Quinton Spicer and **Emile Eugene**,
Hartford Adult Education Center, Hartford – Second place, \$750
Tilapia Fish Farm

Mike Davis, New Britain High School, New Britain – Tied for third place, \$500
Beef, Chicken and Veggie Patties

Lucien Francilette, Crosby High School, Waterbury – Tied for third place, \$500
Unique Vending Machines

Terrance Hargrove, New Britain High School, New Britain – Honorable Mention, \$200
Burning Passions Scented Candles

Sharece Sellem, Hartford Adult Education Center, Hartford – Honorable Mention, \$200
Bon Voyage Baskets

Fritz Chery, French Speaking Baptist Church, Stamford – Honorable Mention, \$200
Computer Sales and Service



Agriculture Cluster Launched

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Every industry cluster that is activated enhances Connecticut's economic competitiveness. So the state took another step forward on March 20 when Connecticut's eighth industry cluster held its formal kick-off at the State Capitol.

Connecticut's Agricultural Business Cluster (CAB) is made up of producers of dairy products, eggs, mushrooms, fruits and vegetables, tobacco, wine and forestry products, and includes aquaculture, nurseries, greenhouses and florists. All of these businesses are important to Connecticut's economy. Together they employ nearly 50,000 people, produce more than \$1 billion in annual sales and have an annual impact on the state's economy of an additional \$1 billion. It's an important export industry, too, with 74 percent of its products sold to out-of-state buyers every year.

DECD and cluster members are each providing half of the \$200,000 needed to launch and operate the cluster during its first year.

CAB members will collaborate with one another and with other sectors to enhance the growth and competitiveness of the state's agricultural industry. The group plans to focus on managing byproducts effectively, promoting Connecticut-grown products, developing the workforce and dealing with forces that threaten the industry, including zoning, environmental regulations and encroaching urbanization. One of the group's goals is to generate a new business model for organizations engaged in agricultural activities—one better able to meet the demands of 21st century challenges.

New Willimantic-Area Training Network to Focus on IT

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Early on, Governor's Council members urged the creation of business training networks as a way to help small and medium-sized firms identify their mutual training needs and develop action plans to fill training gaps. Since the Connecticut Business Training Network (CBTN) program was begun two and one-half years ago, nine networks had formed, helping 77 companies and more than 11,000 workers gain skills critical to success in the global economy.

Now a 10th network has joined those ranks. The creation of the Information Technology Professionals and Users Network was announced by Lieutenant Governor Rell on Feb. 20. The new network, which will focus on information technology training needs in eastern

Connecticut, is made up of six Willimantic organizations: Greywolf Technologies Inc., Windham Community Memorial Hospital, Savings Institute, Sumner and Sumner, Hawk Integrated Plastics and United Abrasives.

The group plans to survey area businesses to determine IT training needs, identify existing training programs and determine if new programs need to be developed to fill training gaps. By making wise investments in training to improve employee skills, the companies will become more competitive and make greater contributions to the competitiveness of the area and the state as a whole.

DECD works in partnership with CBIA to both develop and support this market-driven worker training initiative.

Plastics Cluster Drawing on ACM Experience

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If the synergy created when companies work together in a cluster is powerful, just imagine the potential benefits of having whole clusters learn from one another.

That's exactly what got underway when the state's second-youngest cluster, the Connecticut Plastics Council, held its annual membership meeting on March 21 in its Waterbury headquarters.

Guest speaker at the event was Doug Rose, president of Aero Gear Inc. and chairman of the board of directors of the Aerospace Components Manufacturers (ACM) cluster. Rose was asked to discuss ACM's accomplishments in the area of lean manufacturing. Adopting lean manufacturing techniques—an approach advocated strongly by the Governor's Council from the start—

was a priority for ACM when it began several years ago. Since then, ACM member companies have had remarkable success in implementing those techniques in their workplaces, and the results have been seen in greater productivity, performance and profitability.

Incorporating lean manufacturing principles typically increases productivity, reduces costs and shortens turnaround times, thus making companies—and industries—more competitive.

Adopting lean techniques is a top priority with the Plastics Cluster. Learning from ACM's experience will help accelerate their transition to lean.